

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /066 W

-----080577 210600Z /15

R 201200Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2072

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 0266

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PA

SUBJ: POLICE KILLINGS ALLEGED

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FROM SEPARATE OPPOSITION SOURCES (REPRESENTIN
G

TWO DISTINCT PARTIES) A REPORT THAT SIX PERSONS RECENTLY WERE KILLED
BY THE POLICE, PRESUMABLY WHILE UNDER INTERROGATION. THE SIX ARE
SAID TO HAVE INCLUDED JORGE AGUSTIN ZAVALA ESQUIVEL, OFFICIALLY
IDENTIFIED AS HAVEING BEEN KILLED IN A POLICE SHOOTOUT ON
JANUARY 12 DURING A RAID ON A

"PRIMERO DE MARZO" TERRORIST CELL; PERSIO BECKER BENITEZ, 24, A
MEDICAL STUDENT WHOSE FAMILY IS ACTIVE IN COLORADO PARTY AFFAIRS;
AND FOUR OTHER UNIDENTIFIED YOUTHS.

2. ACCORDING TO THE VERSION SUPPLIED BY A COUSIN OF PERSIO BECKER,
HE LEFT ASUNCION DECEMBER 29 TO RETURN TO SCHOOL IN BRAZIL, AND
HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM SINCE. THE BODIES OF PERSIO, ZAVALA AND
THE OTHER FOUR WERE DELIVERED BY THE POLICE TO THE POLICE HOSPITAL
IN ASUNCION ON JANUARY 11 (THE DAY BEFORE ZAVALA SUPPOSEDLY WAS
KILLED IN THE SHOOTOUT). PERSIO'S MOTHER, WORRIED ABOUT HER SON'S
DISAPPEARANCE, SET OFF FOR BRAZIL TO CHECK UP ON HIM AND
SHE TOO HAS VANISHED.

3. OUR SOURCES SPECULATE THAT THE INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY
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VERSION OF A TERRORIST PLOT AS REVEALED BY THE POLICE ON
JANUARY 13 MAY BE A CLUMSY EFFORT BY THE INVESTIGATIONS
POLICE TO COVER UP THE DEATH OF THE SIX, AND THEY WONDER
(OR HOPE) THIS MAY SIGNIFY AN INTERNAL CONFLICT UNDERWAY
AMONG OPPOSING FACTIONS WITHIN THE COLORADO PARTY. (THE
MORE PREVALENT ASSUMPTION LOCALLY IS THAT THE "PRIMERO DE
MARZO" STORY IS AN EFFORT TO DEFLECT ATTENTION FROM THE

POLICE'S EMBARRASSMENT OVER THE ARREST AND MISTREATMENT OF
19 LABOR LEADERS AT YPACARAI LAST MONTH.)

4. EMBASSY IS TRYING TO CONFIRM REPORTED DEATHS THROUGH
OTHER SOURCES AND WILL REPORT FURTHER. IN A TOWN AS SMALL AS
ASUNCION, IT WOULD SEEM UNLIKELY ANY SUCH INCIDENT, IF TRUE,
COULD BE KEPT QUIET VERY LONG.
WHITE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: YOUTH, ALLEGATIONS, TERRORISTS, DEATHS, POLICE FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ASUNCIO0266
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780032-0295
Format: TEL
From: ASUNCION
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780142/aaaabjly.tel
Line Count: 70
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6d2bc7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3744251
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLICE KILLINGS ALLEGED
TAGS: SHUM, PA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6d2bc7e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014